

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
POPULAR INFORMATION

No. 12

April, 1939

CERCIS OCCIDENTALIS

WESTERN RED-BUD

Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

CERCIS OCCIDENTALIS
WESTERN RED-BUD

Leguminosae

Pea Family

Deciduous shrub or small tree 10-18 ft. in height and spread, much-branched from the base with trunks 1-3 in. in diam., or if with a single trunk, this 4-6 in. in diam., bark smooth, grayish. Leaves alternate, glabrous, appearing in April and May from winter buds shortly after the flowers. Petioles slender, 1-2 in. long; blades $2-3\frac{1}{2}$ in. broad, orbicular, more or less cordate at base, sinus nearly closed, the two halves of leaf often folded upward, palmately 5-veined. Young leaves light, glossy green, slightly reddish, becoming dark green later in the season, turning yellow to slightly reddish before dropping in the late fall. Flowers in clusters of 6-12, arising from winter buds, pea-like, $\frac{5}{8}$ in. long, magenta throughout but the inner face of banner and wings lighter; pedicels $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 in. long; calyx 5-toothed, broader than long; corolla with broad keel about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. long, banner and wings smaller, well reflexed; stamens 10, distinct. Pods 1-celled, very thin, $2-3\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, winged on upper margin, usually containing 3-4 flattened, oval, dark brown seeds. Pods sometimes turn reddish and remain on plants for several months after maturing in September.

The name Cercis was derived from the Greek word kerkis, the early name of the Oriental Judas Tree. About 6 kinds of Cercis are known from Europe, Asia and North America. In addition to the Western Red-Bud, there are two other species in North America, of which the American Red-Bud (Cercis canadensis) of the Eastern United States and Canada is a highly-prized ornamental tree with pink flowers.

The Western Red-Bud (Cercis occidentalis) was first collected by Ferdinand Lindheimer about 100 years ago in western Texas and was published in 1850 by John Torrey, noted American botanist. Its distribution is from western Texas to Utah, Arizona and California, but it is so predominantly Californian that it has often been called California Red-Bud. In California it has a widespread distribution, occurring abundantly in the North Coast Ranges from Solano and Napa Cos. to Humboldt and Trinity Cos., thence to Shasta Co. and south in the Sierras to Tulare and Kern Cos. It is unknown in the South Coast Ranges, but appears in the Cuyamaca Mts., of San Diego Co. (only known Southern California location). It is particularly beautiful and abundant in the foothills of the southern Sierras; in Lake Co.;

and along the Trinity River, Trinity County.

We have grown the Western Red-Bud for over 8 years and now have some splendid bushes about 12 ft. in height. Younger plants are also widely planted. Propagation has been by seeds which, unless given special treatment, may not germinate for many years. We have one lot of seeds planted in 1932 from which a few seedlings appear each spring. Rapid germination is assured if hot water (160-180 degrees F.) is poured over the seeds and allowed to stand for 24 hours. Seeds handled in this manner should be planted in late winter or early spring and will result in plants a foot or so high by the end of the growing season. Given adequate water and reasonable care the plants will make from 2-3 ft. of growth per year and will bloom when 3 or 4 years old. They are not particular as to soil and will grow in heavy adobe as evidenced by the fine specimens in the Administration Building Grounds. Flowers appear late in March and last for about three weeks. Some variation in blooming has been noted from year to year, apparently depending on the coldness of the winter. The Western Red-Bud can be grown throughout California, except on the deserts, but will bloom more profusely in areas where the winter temperatures drop below 28 degrees on a number of nights. Individual variation in the shade of flowers as well as the amount and time of flowering has been noted in the Garden. Selection for superior horticultural features may prove of value. The leaves rapidly attain full size and clothe the plants with their clean green foliage throughout the summer and fall. The pods enlarge rapidly and soon become straw-colored. Foliage is shed late in November or December.

The Western Red-Bud may be used for early spring color in much the same way that flowering peaches and cherries are used, but it is not a substitute, since its magenta colored flowers are ordinarily not found in those plants.

Dealers in California native plants have listed the Western Red-Bud for years. Small plants should be obtained during the dormant season (December to early March). It is difficult to successfully obtain small plants in the wild and these often make little or no growth for a year or two after being brought into a garden.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted
to the growth and study of the native plants
of California for their botanical, horticult-
ural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

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Reissued without change of text, April, 1941